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**THE MAKING OF URSULA BRANGWEN'S IDENTITY:
THE PATTERN OF THE RITUAL SCENES
IN *THE RAINBOW***

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While *The Rainbow* has been belatedly recognized as one of the great novels of the twentieth century, the second half of the novel, which focuses on the maturation of Ursula Brangwen, has been generally judged the lesser half. Most of the criticism is directed against the radical manner in which it departs from the rich rhythms and structure and the unique mode of characterization of the first half. Numerous critics have pointed out the flatter characters and the mechanical structure in the latter half of the novel as a sign of artistic inferiority,¹ and much criticism has also been leveled against those sections—Ursula's ritual scenes—which most echo the first half and help to unify the novel; it is with the individual and collective logic of these scenes as they form a progressive series of epiphanic moments instrumental in the gradual formation of Ursula's identity that I am concerned here.

David Daiches finds the moon symbolism in the first major ritual scene between Ursula and Anton Skrebensky vague: "The symbol does not really work in its context."² In general he finds such writing "murky and overinsistent."³ Roger Sale criticizes the same scene, describing it as "out of control," "desperately wrong," and "vague," and compares it unfavorably with an earlier ritual scene in the first half of the novel: "All this contrasts sharply with the firmness and assurance of the scene with Will and Anna in the field. The vagueness here is a real vagueness."⁴ S. L. Goldberg also writes of "vagueness" and "hollow rhetoric"⁵ and notes "a degree of over-pitched insistence, an extravagant verbal energy that is devoted not to rendering the action dramatically, but to forcing a special sense of it,"⁶ which he connects particularly with a later ritual scene between Ursula and Skrebensky that occurs upon Anton's return from Africa. Graham Hough writes of the last of Ursula's ritual scenes—her encounter with a group of horses at the very end of the novel—that what happens "*ought* to be a mystery, but in fact it becomes a muddle."⁷ Even Arnold Kettle, in defending the second half as more complex, "more moving, more courageous, more fully relevant to the twentieth-century,"⁸ attempts to justify its form in a manner that all but concedes the validity of such criticisms. He suggests that Ursula's unrealized vision "should be given no

coherent, concrete expression . . . but a misty, vague, and unrealized vision which gives us no more than the general sense that Lawrence is, after all, on the side of life."⁹

Other critics particularly criticize these later ritual scenes for being verbose and repetitive, suggesting that the Ursula-Skrebensky relationship should have been treated far more summarily. Keith Sagar writes of the "repetitive and overwritten symbolic passages" which "draw out interminably the breaking of this" relationship.¹⁰ George H. Ford, referring to the Ursula section of the novel, writes, "Repetitive scenes, which function well elsewhere, remain here, sometimes, merely repetitive,"¹¹ and F. R. Leavis, in listing the imperfections of the novel, writes, "Above all, the sterile deadlock between Ursula and Skrebensky . . . seems too long-drawn-out."¹²

The array of negative judgments is formidable and the contrast between the two halves of the novel upon which such judgments are in part based is indisputable. However, any appraisal of a novel as historically oriented as *The Rainbow* should, of necessity, place the changing, temporal context of successive Brangwen generations at the heart of its aesthetic criteria. In fact, one of the great achievements of the novel is the manner in which it dramatizes the varying manifestations of the general principles of human behavior as simultaneously influenced by both historical and personal contexts. The insights which individual scenes embody are always partially relative, the aspect and degree of truth contingent upon the particular nature of the characters, place, and time involved. In general, the most fundamental tensions in Lawrence's fiction are produced by the struggle between the universal and the particular, the archetypal and the historical, and in *The Rainbow*—the most historically conscious of his novels, covering the transitional generations from the agrarian to the industrial era and from a preliterate to a highly self-conscious culture—such relativistic, temporal considerations are especially important. Lawrence's continual attempt to depict the commonality of human experience in every character and every scene in the novel is balanced by a corresponding insistence on the relativity of historical and individual contexts through which such universal elements are refracted.

Although the fundamentally dualistic character of Lawrence's vision—as outlined, for instance, in his theoretical *Study of Thomas Hardy*—is generally recognized by critics, application of that dualism to the subtleties of *The Rainbow* has proved more elusive. The critical judgments which I have cited seem to me primarily due to just such a failure to appreciate fully the essential dualism of Lawrence's conception of human nature and the manner in which it both determines the novel's characterization and plot and is reflected in its style and

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structure, thus making inappropriate the application of a monolithic aesthetic model to both halves of the novel. That failure, in turn, can be largely attributed to the latent nature of the novel's structure in which that dualism is embodied. Unlike a more traditional, Victorian novel in which a character develops in a more or less straightforward fashion and the stages of development can be explicitly noted at appropriate points by an omniscient narrator, Lawrence's understanding of character development, at least in his early fiction, tends toward what might be termed a conservative realism—a sense of man's natural inertia against growth, his changing only in a stubborn, practically imperceptible, and continually fluctuating manner, concerning which any simple authorial announcement of a clear plateau definitively attained would be formally inappropriate. Therefore, it is primarily by means of the novel's organic structure that the progression of otherwise episodic scenes is given coherence and the development of Ursula's character can be measured.

While Lawrence may seem to adopt a traditional, omniscient, and thus "objective" narratorial stance, the novel is governed instead, in accordance with his dualistic vision, by a continually shifting and restricted point of view in which Lawrence intermittently adopts not only the viewpoint but also the emotive rhythms of a central character of a scene. For instance, in describing Skrebensky's indulgence in liquor to drown his inner pain, Lawrence writes so that the rhythms of his prose echo an increasingly intoxicated Skrebensky:

He only became happy when he drank, and he drank a good deal. Then . . . he became a warm, diffuse, glowing cloud, in a warm, diffuse formless fashion. Everything melted down into a rosy glow, and he was the glow, and everything was the glow, everybody else was the glow, and it was very nice, very nice. He would sing songs, it was so nice.¹³

The rhythmic and sonorous language of the opening sections of the novel is undeniably more immediately pleasing than the harsh and violent tones in which Ursula's ritual scenes are painted, just as the structure of the first half is more perceptibly balanced than that of the second. Yet, such harmonies do not represent simply some ideal prelapsarian absolute to which Lawrence would have us return if possible. Each section's formal characteristics are an intrinsic reflection of its particular content and historical background; and the style which Lawrence employs in describing Ursula's ritual scenes and which Daiches calls "overinsistent" and Sale labels "out of control" when compared with "the firmness and assurance" of the earlier sheave-

gathering ritual between Will and Anna is no less appropriate to Ursula's generation and the vision of the second half of *The Rainbow* than the more "controlled" style is to an earlier generation of Brangwens and the vision they embody. Ursula, not her depiction, is out of control, and rather than being the "misty" and "vague" success that Kettle suggests, the latter half is organized about ritual scenes rendered in a precise and purposeful manner according to Lawrence's vision of the particular characteristics of the modern age.

The language of these ritual scenes is more prototypically Lawrencian than in the example describing Skrebensky's gradual intoxication and, therefore, not so manifestly infused with the consciousness of the characters described. Thus, it is easy to mistake attitudes which in large part belong to a character and reflect his own personality and background for Lawrence's when at best they are only partially his. This sort of oversimplification is responsible, for instance, for the many misreadings of the famous Cathedral scene in which Will Brangwen's thoughts during his quasi-mystical, ritualistic experience are mistaken for Lawrence's. Although Lawrence employs terms suggestive of his own vision, that vision embodies a dynamism quite the opposite of Will's desire for "neutrality" (p. 199) and stasis; Lawrence's goal of balanced polarities never included their mutual cancellation, and for Will such a desire for neutralization tellingly results in a gradual loss of spirit and a kind of neutering as well. Rather than embodying some Lawrencian ideal, such ritual scenes reflect the interpretation of universally experienced elements by the limited and partially distorting context of individual experience—in a sense, a union of Lawrence the Prophet and Lawrence the Novelist. Thus, it is only through the composite pattern of the ritual scenes in the second half of *The Rainbow* that Lawrence's vision of and answer to the modern age is expressed, and it is only by closely examining these scenes both in their particular context and, comparatively, within the overall series that their individual function can be understood. Not only are they not redundant, but, as it is my purpose to show, they also form a progressive series of identity-building crises for Ursula, each one an essential link built upon the preceding scenes and providing a necessary link to the next. First, however, before examining them, it is necessary to delineate those underlying, generative principles on which they are built.

I

For Lawrence, man should ideally be balanced between his instinctual nature and his conscious, rational side, between "being" and "knowing"—a balance dependant upon the proper coordination of

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activity and passivity. The properly adjusted individual requires initial passivity to sensitize him to the larger rhythms of nature and the instinctual reflection of those rhythms within himself; out of such passivity should naturally evolve a vital and organic activity in line with those rhythms. The more manifest and superficial cerebral faculties should be coordinated with such deeper rhythms, symbiotically being guided by them and in turn guiding them, rather than dictatorially determining them.

However, in reality such balance is impossible to maintain continually. The coordination between mind and body, reason and instinct, is tenuous and intermittent; one aspect—in Ursula's generation, the mind—tends to become overly dominant, opening a breach between the two halves which, if not closed, is likely to widen. The function of ritualistic action is to prevent or to heal this split by reaffirming those instinctual and archetypal aspects from which man periodically becomes estranged, thus reestablishing a healthful balance between mind and body. In a traditional, agrarian society, the natural environment coupled with inner needs makes the ritual participant receptive both to nature and to his own unconscious, and from that passive receptivity he ideally should be propelled into action: first, the rhythmic and therapeutic dance of the ritual itself occurs in which instinct guides, and then, after the ritual has ended and the participant's emotional state has been appropriately altered, realistic action can be more accurately formulated to rectify the imbalance that originally motivated the ritual.

Lawrencian ritual characteristically thus functions as a mediating or corrective act, inescapably contextual, rather than an absolute end in itself, an unchanging vehicle designed to embody momentary perfection through an escape of time and space. It is a catalyst initiating union both between individuals and between those internal aspects of self. It arises from the interaction between particular emotional needs and a precipitating external event, both situated in a specific time and place; and, in turn it is the kernel from which the rhythms of subsequent characterization and action evolve. Thus related to both its immediate context and the larger historical environment, the ritual itself reflects and is conditioned by those more ephemeral, individualized and individualizing elements even as it tries to reduce or even escape from them. Attempting to redress an imbalance, it must of necessity be unbalanced itself, a counter to the "daytime" imbalance it is meant to rectify; its emphasis and intensity will be determined in part by that "daytime" context. Readings that reductively emphasize only the "deeper" archetypal and more universal qualities of Lawrence's characters and their ritualistic actions thus insure that those scenes will seem more repetitive than they indeed are.

An ideal balance would seem to exist for the earliest Brangwen generations. Ritual exists naturally in their daily round of activities and can relatively easily reestablish the necessary connection between man and nature, thus keeping mind in touch with body. The flowing, rhythmic language in which the Brangwens' agrarian life and the rituals naturally generated by it are described reflects this easy harmony. However, for these early Brangwens closely in touch with the instinctual life, so accessible and successful are the daily ritual opportunities that the difficulty is not one of reestablishing such internal coordination between body and mind, but rather of converting such harmony into activity of a sufficiently directed and forward-looking nature. The tendency is toward lethargy and somnolence, and it might be argued that the immediacy of the aesthetic pleasure Lawrence's prose produces in describing such an outlook embodies these very limitations, for, unlike the greater complexity of the aesthetics and vision of the second half of the novel, such rhythms do not require the reader to extend himself intellectually and go beyond the immediate description to attain satisfaction.

For modern man—those characters who belong to Ursula's generation—the task that ritual must accomplish is far greater and more difficult even though its ultimate aim remains the same: to right the imbalance within man through reaffirmation of the instincts so that he can properly direct his further efforts toward the fulfillment of his essential needs, spiritual as well as physical. As each successive generation of Brangwens moves further from the land and the natural controlling rhythms of an agrarian communal life with its daily rituals, there are inevitably fewer truly organic and cathartic rituals. For Ursula, not only is there no real contact with nature or community, but the institutionalized "sacred" time has been reduced to once-a-week—"the Sunday world" (p. 269)—and Ursula complains that even that day has become secularized. The disappearance of ritual is reflected in the second half of the novel and is responsible for the appropriately mechanical nature of both structure and characterization; the natural rhythms which emanated from earlier ritual scenes and organically shaped the plot in the first half are no longer generated. From Chapter Ten through Chapter Fourteen—the first one hundred and seventy pages of the second half of the novel and approximately one-third of the novel's entire length—there is only one fully realized ritual scene: the moon dance between Ursula and Skrebensky.

The enormous changes in environment between the agrarian generation of Tom Brangwen and the largely industrialized generation of Ursula thus are accompanied by corresponding changes in man's character. In fact, the very freedom which civilized man's intellectual development makes possible is responsible for a progressively radical

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split between the conscious mind and the instincts. That freedom does not, at least in the modern era, create a corresponding wisdom to guide the mind toward reuniting with the instincts. Therefore, the proper context needed to prompt naturally a ritual is not only likely to prove rare, but in the end it will also need to be more extreme in order to overcome the extremity of the split. Furthermore, without the support of nature and community, both the fact and success of a ritual will depend increasingly on the individual qualities of the participant rather than on his social or generic role in the ritual, thus placing a greater emotional burden upon him and requiring greater strength of him. Rituals of greater intensity are likely to result, often as a sudden climactic outburst of a partially-repressed emotional crisis.

The increasing intensity of the later ritual scenes is thus no accidental authorial imposition; the tonal intensity stands in inverse proportion to the frequency of ritual in the participant's life and can be clearly noted by comparing Lydia's gradual and passive return to life after her husband's death through a daily and seasonal ritualistic intercourse with nature¹⁴ to any of Ursula's later rituals. Lydia's rebirth can be accomplished so passively because of her environment which actively forces upon her ritual participation in spite of herself. The growth in intensity can also be noted within the course of Anna's or Ursula's life. Anna's sheave dance, a ritual still naturally linked with nature and thus organically growing out of the environment, is far less harsh and insistent than her later dance of active domination in her bedroom. While Ursula's ritual scenes are so varied and numerous that it is impossible to delineate any simple progression, the increased intensity can be noted by comparing her first ritual scene—the original moon dance with Skrebensky in which her destructive qualities are partially restrained—with her last ritual encounter with him when she totally releases those destructive tendencies and indeed does "destroy" him. In Ursula's generation, intensity becomes violence, whether in personal ritual or the group "ritual" of the Boer War in which Skrebensky participates, for there is no constant, organic social context to order and contain the anarchy of individual emotions.

Although the earlier, traditional Brangwen generations are too passive, motivated only by the deeper instinctual activity without subsequent ability to channel that energy into directed action in the future, Ursula and her era thus tend to be excessively and falsely active. Ursula's early frenetic movement from one segment of society and from one "hero" to another reflects such false and useless activity, lacking an organic base. Such activity results from the reversal of the natural human rhythms; an initial passivity attuned to inner instinctual rhythms and leading to rational external activity is supplanted by the dictatorial and willful imposition of "rational" control upon an all too

passive and increasingly anarchic inner self. Separated from the guidance of the instincts, such control is neither rational nor controlled.

The fecundity of Anna Brangwen's life would seem to stand in sharp contrast to the frenetic and empty activity of her daughter, Ursula; yet, both Anna and Will reflect an earlier phase in the modern age's transposition of the roles of instinct and the conscious mind—one which, relying on the imposition of will, maintains primarily only a facade of control, of "firmness and assurance." Anna is the arch-controller, and in the sheave-gathering scene, she firmly controls the rhythms of the dance by keeping Will at a distance as she subsequently will throughout the course of their marriage. By imposing her will, she precludes any true receptivity to deeper, instinctual rhythms which should be her true guide. These negative qualities in Anna are reflected in even greater degree in her fertility dance ritual which occurs during her pregnancy and which should be a celebration of life but becomes in its later stages primarily a dance of domination over her fearful husband and an early step toward her later isolation and spiritual sterility. Here one can already see the transition from willed control—itsself a flaw—to the hysterical loss of control that Ursula and later her sister, Gudrun, in *Women in Love* will experience.¹⁵

Although such frenetic activity, further intensified in the ritual action resulting from it, reflects the very diseased imbalance which the ritual itself must correct, such activity can provide the means against itself by which the extreme imbalance can be righted and the fever calmed. While earlier rituals need merely to reestablish contact with the temporarily detached instincts, such later rituals must first destroy the false dictatorial control which resists such renewed contact, and, as we shall see, Ursula's energies are increasingly employed efficaciously to make possible a return to a more neutral state receptive to basic inner rhythms. Just as such basic polarities as activity and passivity, and interiority and exteriority are interwoven rather than simply differentiated in Lawrence's vision, creation and destruction are also inextricably bound, and most of Ursula's growth in *The Rainbow* involves her destruction of those negative influences of the modern age personified most fully in Skrebensky. All ritual action inevitably combines the complimentary elements of death and rebirth, destruction and creation, and in the deranged environment of modern society, the better part of resustenance and rebirth is likely to be death and destruction. It is a view articulated fully by Rupert Birkin in *Women in Love* and one which helps explain his own use of passionately critical rhetoric. In that novel the deaths of Gerald Crich and Gudrun, representing the death of a negative aspect of Birkin and Ursula as well, are an inextricable part of their counterparts' rebirth. The contention of critics such as F. R. Leavis, that the last "optimistic" paragraph of *The*

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Rainbow is "wholly unprepared and unsupported, defying the preceding pages,"¹⁶ ignores this dynamic which governs not only the entire ritual sequence but is implicit in the central metaphor of the novel—the Biblical Flood in which destruction leads to the rainbow of peace and unity.

At the same time, while Ursula seems the most active Brangwen, both in her frenzied rituals and in her pursuit of other worlds, she is also the most passive, although in a different manner from the earlier Brangwens; and her frenetic activity itself is one of the symptoms of this fundamental passivity—a sign of her impotence due to the lack of any real identity out of which Lawrence saw humanly efficacious activity organically evolving. These traits are endemic to her generation; part of the cult of otherness which Lawrence connects in *Twilight in Italy* with the false complementary visions of Protestantism and Industrialism, they are also reflected in the moribund passivity of Anna's later years once her prolific child-bearing years have passed. Instead of using ritual, which encourages the immersion in self, to reaffirm one's identity, the modern age looks only outward, attempting to appropriate its identity by identification with another—whether that other be "thy neighbor," Christ, or a godlike machine and its embodiment in automaton-like institutions. Of course, that other, belonging to or conceived by the age, is also likely to have no real identity. It is this dysfunction which turns Skrebensky into a machine-like soldier subordinating himself to his country's cause and which leads Tom Brangwen, Jr., like Gerald Crich, to worship the machine-god of the coal mines even while he bitterly mocks its falseness.

As opposed to such external, false pursuits of identity, participation in ritual is a keystone in a true process of identity formation for Lawrence's characters as it is for actual initiates in more primitive cultures. While the early Brangwens, never doubting who they are even if they do at times partially misconceive themselves, need ritual primarily as a reaffirmation of a clearly felt self, Ursula must first construct her sense of self stage by stage, initially ridding herself of the false pursuit of something outside herself through which her sense of her own nullity is camouflaged. That she takes so long and needs so many rituals to complete her journey to health and identity is appropriate to the extremity of her generation's imbalance. Her realization that her problem, indeed the problem of life in general, is fundamentally an internal one concerning identity follows the initial ritual series of intense interactions with Skrebensky in which the first layer of misconceived identity, based on the belief that one's identity is constructed by copying models external to oneself, is exorcised; in turn, it immediately precedes her participation in the final series of rituals which are instrumental in her construction of a true identity. Looking

at a microscopic organism, she ponders its purpose and realizes that it is "to be itself" (p. 441). The subsequent reappearance of ritual in the final two chapters of the novel thus signifies Ursula's climactic movement toward healing her internal split and is the principle sign of hope in the novel; the sloughing off and symbolic destruction of Skrebensky and the society he represents is only a manifestation of that deeper change.

The nature and purpose of the ritual scenes in the second half of *The Rainbow* and of Ursula's participation in them must be understood within such a framework. The rhythmic patterns both within each scene and throughout them as a whole, uniting them, are heavily dependent upon the manner in which each component in the various pairs of dualities I have emphasized—passivity and activity, interiority and exteriority, and destructiveness and creativity—simultaneously contrasts with and reinforces its complement. In these scenes' collective insight, producing Ursula's rebirth out of the destructive void of modern life, lies the consummation of Lawrence's vision.

II

Each of the five major ritual scenes in which Ursula participates fulfills a separate and important function in her construction of identity. These five scenes are Ursula's original moon dance with Skrebensky at the autumn wedding of Fred Brangwen; her first meeting with Skrebensky upon his return from Africa on Easter six years later, occurring in the "fecund darkness"; their midsummer sunrise lovemaking by the sea at Dorothy Russell's; Ursula's last encounter with Skrebensky in late summer by the sea and under the moon—an encounter in which she destroys him emotionally; and her final climactic experience in the woods with a group of horses one October afternoon. I have noted the times of the year because, although these rituals take place over a period of six years, they form a full cycle of seasons beginning just as harvest time has ended and finishing at the return of October. Only winter, the season of death, is omitted. Moreover, without the last scene with Skrebensky which repeats the temporal setting of the first moon scene, the four other scenes form a cyclical pattern related to the time of day. The first scene starts at dusk and continues as the moon rises; the second occurs in the unrelenting darkness of night; the third, starting at night, reaches its climax with the coming of dawn; and the last scene starts in the late afternoon and ends at dusk. These patterns of daily and seasonal cycles parallel the cycle of identity formation which Ursula undergoes in these five rituals, thus suggesting the natural harmony between man and nature, inner and outer rhythms. Such rhythms are reflected as well in the fluctuation

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between passivity and activity, internal and external experience, destruction and rebirth which characterize individual pairs of these ritual scenes.

The first scene coupled with an earlier short description of Ursula's first kiss with Skrebensky forms an introduction to the ritual cycle, occurring six years before the initiation of that cycle proper, at a time when Ursula is still not ready to profit from the ritual experience. The two passages together depict two central capabilities which she must develop in order to realize herself: first, a positive passivity or receptivity, contrasting to her superficial "Christian" passivity of self-negation, which will open her to her deeper instinctual self, and, second, arising out of that awareness, an aggressive and assured activism increasingly differentiated from her initial feverish activity. Both scenes also demonstrate her fears of both these positive aspects of self—fears which underlie her inability to change immediately. Lawrence writes of the initial kiss:

She was afraid She kept still, helpless. Then his mouth drew near, pressing open her mouth, a hot drenching surge rose within her she let him come farther, his lips came and surging, surging, soft, oh soft, yet oh, like the powerful surge of water, irresistible, till with a little blind cry, she broke away. (pp. 297-298)

The passage describes the evocation of inner rhythms ("a . . . surge rose within her") through passive surrender; yet, it shows Ursula's fearful identification of such passivity with helplessness and her resultant panic.

The ritual dance of the major passage begins by showing Ursula's continued attempt to combat this fear and her choice of a false activism of the will to mask the fear—an aggressiveness which in turn she is afraid of seeing and accepting as part of herself. She desires "to let go" (p. 315), but her letting go is immediately associated by her only with activity and escape from the reality of being human: "She wanted to let go. She wanted to reach and be amongst the flashing stars, she wanted to race with her feet and be beyond the confines of this earth"; and her dance with Skrebensky is a dance of resistant wills; neither participant is able to merge temporarily and creatively with the other any more than with the denied aspect of self: "It was his will and her will . . . two wills locked in one motion, yet never fusing, never yielding one to the other" (p. 316).

With the second phase of the ritual, initiated by the moon's appearance, Ursula temporarily allows herself passivity but that passivity, like the activity that preceded it, is a false one of human

negation. It is achieved only by ignoring Skrebensky and the masculine principle he embodies and "offering herself" instead to "the full moon" (p. 317). Although, as becomes increasingly clear, that moon is a symbolic corollary to her own potential identity as a woman, as yet she recognizes it only as something outside herself which implicitly confirms her own incompleteness: "She wanted the moon to fill in to her, she wanted more, more communion with the moon, consummation" (p. 317). The language here clearly suggests a symbolic sexual union of sorts as well, but one that significantly replaces the male element with a female one, perhaps foreshadowing Ursula's liaison with Winifred Inger. In the moon she finds an appropriate external correlative of herself and her needs, and she temporarily assumes the powerful qualities she has previously ascribed to the moon: "She was cold and hard and compact of brilliance as the moon itself, and beyond him as the moonlight was beyond him" (p. 318). Using the moonlight as if it were "a steel blade" (p. 319), she is now able to become the active agent of the moon. Both Skrebensky and the other party-goers, designated as "dross" and "load-stones" (p. 317), must be destroyed so that she can continue her pursuit of her "cold liberty" (p. 317), a double-edged term which suggests a clear ambivalence toward the type of "liberty" Ursula seeks. Pursued at the expense of denying that part of her humanity and indeed womanhood as it is in part defined through contrast with the masculine, such freedom is limited, even illusory, like the cold light of the moon.

The aspect of identity which the scene emphasizes is that of separateness—the desire to delineate clearly one's boundaries to prevent intrusion by a foreign element. Yet, while that quality is both an inevitability and a virtue in Lawrence's understanding of identity, thus contrasting with the romantic desire for total merger, Ursula's desire for *absolute* separation from any "other" is a distortion of that principle. Despite Daiches's suggestion that the moon symbolism is vague, its symbolic meaning seems clearly carried within the scene and in accord with such concerns. The qualities which are ascribed to it are those which declare its separateness—"cold," "hard," and "compact"—and indicate its ability to destroy elements which might try to touch it—"salt," "corrosive," "steel blade," and "cold fire." Not only does it suggest individual identity and freedom (as in "cold liberty") but also clear limitation as in the moon's emphatic coldness; its light and "fire" are borrowed from the sun and provide no warmth. Lawrence's later description of the moon in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* suggests the same lunar attributes:

The moon [is] the planet of women. The moon is the centre of our terrestrial individuality She is the

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declaration of our existence in separateness . . . that cold, proud white fire of furious, almost malignant apartness.¹⁷

If Lawrence thus means to suggest that Ursula is asserting her separateness as a woman—an assertion which will lead in its extreme to her ill-advised liaison with Winifred—then she has yet to learn that, while Skrebensky himself is peripheral to her identity, the male principle which he embodies must be recognized and accepted as a part of her own full identity. As we shall see, this recognition will form the core of her last stage of identity formation in the novel in her interaction with the horses in the forest, preparing her to meet and partially identify with Birkin in *Women in Love*. Ursula's overinsistence on establishing her identity at this early stage only through an absolute relationship with Skrebensky, whether adoration or total repudiation, and not through simultaneous correspondence and contrast, demonstrates the inchoateness of her sense of identity.

The fluctuations in the scene reflect not only the natural ritualistic rhythms, but also this deeper sense of uncertainty about who she is, resulting in a constant attempt to escape herself and her fear that she is either nothing or something evil. Despite their superficial opposition to one another, her allegiance to the moon, her temporary submission to Skrebensky, and her desire to destroy him all reflect this underlying escapist and self-negating aim. Even the strength she borrows from the moon intimidates her. Uncomfortable with something not yet truly her own and afraid of the amoral implications of her aggressiveness, her fears once again possess her: "She was afraid of what she was" (p. 319). However, the weakness which her mask of passivity reflects also is unsatisfactory to her, and unable to repress her deeper need of defending herself, she returns to a more effective activism and proceeds to "annihilate" Skrebensky. Yet, she is still unable to reconcile this assertiveness with her naive definition of herself, and upon her recovering her "daytime consciousness," remorse returns and she attempts to "deny . . . with all her might" this aggressiveness: "She was good, she was loving" (p. 321). In order to perpetuate this fiction, she momentarily adopts the pose of "his adoring slave" (p. 321), hoping to destroy what now seems the greater threat—an awareness of who she is.

Ursula's reunion with Skrebensky upon his return from Africa six years later sharply contrasts with this preliminary ritual. She responds after all her years of empty activity by accepting a primarily passive role, one quite different, however, from her earlier role as an "adoring slave." She shows a willingness, even desire, to open herself up to Skrebensky—particularly to the male, the "other," element in him which earlier she had evaded in her union with the female moon, and

although she is passive, it is an active and positive passivity which she herself chooses.

Earlier in the day she has begun to accept the generic in both herself and Skrebensky—his male body and her own womanhood:

She represented before him all the grace and flower of humanity. She was no mere Ursula Brangwen. She was Woman, she was the whole of Woman in the human order. All-containing, universal, how should she be limited to individuality? (p. 444)

Now, in contrast to the earlier scene in which the light of the moon accentuated differences and encouraged individuation, the “profound” and “fecund” darkness in which they kiss masks their individuality and encourages their union. Skrebensky seems to bring with him the aura of primitive Africa which makes possible an atavistic union with their primitive, archetypal past as well, and it is thus through him and not merely through the female moon that she finds her larger nature. In place of two resistant wills and two clearly-demarcated roles, this time her will is receptive, their similarities are emphasized (“darkness cleaving to darkness”) and there is a true merging:

He seemed like the living darkness upon her She was all dark, will-less, having only the receptive will. He kissed her, with his soft, enveloping kisses, and she responded to them completely, her mind, her soul gone out. Darkness cleaving to darkness, she hung close to him, pressed herself into the soft flow of his kiss, pressed herself down, down to the source and core of his kiss, herself covered and enveloped in the warm, fecund flow of his kiss so they were one stream, one dark fecundity

So they stood in the utter, dark kiss, that triumphed over them both, subjected them, knitted them into one fecund nucleus of the fluid darkness.

It was bliss. (pp. 446-447)

Lawrence’s language creates a precise contrast with the previous kiss; the words “warm,” “soft,” and “dark” contrast with the earlier “cold,” “hard,” and “light” and suggest an overcoming of distinctions and individuality rather than an accentuation of them. Ursula is now unafraid and does not feel the need to hold onto her sense of individual boundaries. Skrebensky does not dominate her; rather both are “subjected” to the all-encompassing power of nature to which Ursula actively gives herself, enhancing rather than sacrificing a positive sense

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of identity. Later, returning to London, she notices this same sensualism beneath the fastidious facades of all the people on the tram, "dark with the same homogeneous desire" (p. 448), thus impressing on her mind the fact of the common base of all people's sense of self that she herself has just experienced.

For Lawrence, however, such sensualism is itself limited and, in fact, can prove ultimately unproductive, even stagnating, unless subsumed within a larger process. The kiss, after all, is only foreplay, and for all its vitality, by itself in its inducement of a momentary loss of self, it is a type of death, as the utter darkness suggests. Although Skrebensky performs well in this sensual capacity, he is incapable of moving beyond it, and Ursula is right to love him only for his male animality. He immediately demonstrates his limitations by simplistically translating the ritual experience into absolute social terms ("I suppose we ought to get married" [p. 452]), when the union that has occurred is pre-social and partial. His statement reflects the age's confusion of a superficial social morality with a conscience of the spirit. Although Ursula has begun to realize the difference, the knowledge and strength she must gain in order to escape Skrebensky and the insidious social ties he represents are a central concern of the final three ritual scenes; for although he himself is weak, he has the values of an entire age behind him, and her battles with him are not merely personal but political as well. One only has to think of Lawrence, like Ursula, summoning all his strength in an endless search for a location free from the false gods of his age.

The contribution of this ritualistic experience to Ursula's sense of her self is indicated after the consummation of the kiss several days later. She begins to learn not to define herself in relationship to "the other," but in her own right:

Her soul was sure and indifferent of the opinion of the world of artificial light Her everyday self was just the same. She merely had another, stronger self that knew the darkness.

This curious separate strength, that existed in darkness and pride of night, never forsook her. She had never been more herself. It could not occur to her that anybody, not even . . . Skrebensky, should have anything at all to do with her permanent self

The world is not strong—she was strong. The world existed only in a secondary sense: —she existed supremely. (p. 452)

The next ritual scene, serving as a belated consummation of the kiss, immediately reflects changes in Ursula. Her passivity in the

preceding scene and the sense of her generic self she has discovered have prepared her for a commanding activeness different from her aggressiveness of years earlier which arose out of insecurity. Here she is sure of herself and truly in control as the assured rhythms of Lawrence's prose make clear: "She took off her clothes, and made him take off his He served her" (p. 464). Anton has become incidental, he, rather than she, the slave; now it is directly with nature that she wishes to unite:

She wished she could become a strong mound smooth under the sky, bosom and limbs bared to all winds and clouds and bursts of sunshine She took him . . . but her eyes were open looking at the stars, it was as if the stars were lying with her and entering the unfathomable darkness of her womb, fathoming her at last. It was not him. (pp. 463-464)

Her passivity occurs only in relationship to nature, not, as with the kiss, in relationship to Skrebensky, and unlike her passivity in the first ritual scene, it now arises out of a sense of self rather than from its absence. Her relationship with the sky is also different from her relationship to the moon in that first scene. She measures herself *against* the sky, using it as a foil, rather than denying herself by replacing herself *with* it as she did with the moon. There the moon "fill[s] . . . her . . . in" (p. 317); here it enters her in order to "fathom" her. She, not it, is the center.

While the ritual thus contrasts with the initial ritual under the moon, it complements and helps crown the intermediary ritual of the kiss, as the movement from darkness towards light between the two scenes reflects. While the kiss as a preliminary step occurs in spring, the consummation appropriately occurs in midsummer. The climax of both scenes immediately follows Ursula's union with sea and sky. Out of the death-like, sensual darkness of the kiss and the pre-dawn starlit night of the sea experience arises a more spiritual dawn, and in accordance with Lawrence's dualism, these two aspects of body and spirit are contiguous; the early-morning birth of Ursula's incipient identity grows out of the earlier dark sensualism, and rather than strictly opposing it as a more traditional vision of creative spirit might have it, the dawn is sexual too, orgasmically climaxing the sequence:

The light grew stronger, gushing up against the dark sapphire of the transparent night A flush of rose, and then yellow . . . the whole quivering and poising momentarily over the fountain on the sky's rim.

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The rose hovered and quivered, burned, fused to flame, to a transient red, while the yellow urged out in great waves, thrown from the ever-increasing fountain, great waves of yellow flinging into the sky, scattering its spray over the darkness.

The sun was coming

A cock crew Everything was newly washed into being, in a flood of new, golden creation. (p. 465)

This strongly positive climax to the ritual sequence marks the attainment of a significant plateau for Ursula—the establishment of a primary sense of identity. Turning away from the superficial allure of the outer world as represented primarily by Skrebensky, she has slowly reestablished contact with her deepest self. Yet, although she has turned her back on him, having outgrown her need for his person, she has still to actively root out his strong and insidious presence within her, and the final two ritual scenes are dedicated to this end—the destruction of, first, his person and, then, the more abstract reflection of him in the society at large. Ursula's successive levels of involvement with Skrebensky are, therefore, first, a fear and attempted avoidance of him in the face of his assertion of maleness that threatens to nullify her weak identity; second, a gradual accommodation with, appreciation of, and finally, controlled use of him through which she finds she can begin to experience her own selfhood; third, a sloughing off and then active destruction of him.

The next ritual thus continues the rhythmic fluctuation of the ritual series; not only does Ursula's earlier emphasis on internal matters temporarily yield to external concerns, but her passivity gives way to renewed aggressiveness and creation yields to destructiveness. Just as the extinction of self in darkness leads to a subsequent rebirth at dawn in union with the external world of Nature, Ursula's external "murder" of Skrebensky in this scene will lead in the final ritual to an internal rebirth in which the external world temporarily ceases to matter.

Although the scene outwardly resembles the introductory ritual scene of six years ago—both violent attacks on Skrebensky in the moonlight—there are subtle but important differences between the two acts that mirror Ursula's growth and the greater force and effectiveness that that growth gives the second attack. Her greater wholeness is suggested in the nature imagery continued from the preceding ritual. The moon does not stand alone, as it did in the introductory ritual, but is joined by the complementary waves of the ocean, suggesting a harmony between earth and sky through the mediating sea. While Anton attempts to hide in his element of darkness, "to be buried" (p. 479), Ursula seeks to be close to both the waves and the

moonlight, thus uniting the complementary elements of nature developed separately in the two previous scenes. Unlike her guilt in the original moon scene caused by seeing herself too clearly, she now desires clarity of vision, and although her second attack on Skrebensky is far more aggressive, it is not followed by a period of remorse and denial. She accepts the asocial, non-Christian side of herself as an inevitable and necessary part of human nature.

Most important, whereas her earlier attack on Skrebensky was almost completely motivated by a reaction to his actions and will, now she is the determining agent. It is not really even the person of Skrebensky that provokes the attack; the precipitating event seems to be her awareness of her continued vulnerability to society in general: "She was not used to these homogeneous crowds. She was afraid. She felt different from the rest of them, with their hard, easy, shallow intimacy" (p. 476). However, importantly her fear here is not of a society she regards as stronger or superior to herself, but rather one to be feared because of its deficiencies. Skrebensky shows himself to be one of the "others" who constitute society, deriving his strength from it: "He could take his part very well with the rest . . . He was sure of himself" (p. 476). Ursula's negative sense of the homogeneity of the crowd contrasts with her earlier sense of oneness with its universal aspects and demonstrates that her concerns now are other ones. Having established her generic identity, she feels that she must distance herself from the corrupting aspect of her society's particular character. Thus, while her feelings here smack of paranoia and the viciousness of her attack on Skrebensky may seem unwarranted and out of proportion to its immediate target, the attack is symbolic as well. Skrebensky's weakness is also the age's deceptive and insidious strength, and while both he and it are internally weak, their defeat—prefiguring the later actual desperate political struggles in Italy and Germany that concerned Lawrence—is no mean achievement. In Ursula's renewed awareness of her vulnerability to the evils of the social environment, Lawrence suggests the twofold nature of man's identity—his inability to live in isolation from society, the inevitable intermixture of internal and external realities, and the necessity, therefore, of actively attacking and eliminating external threats even as one seeks to withdraw from them and becomes increasingly sure of one's separation from them.

The final ritual scene in the novel—Ursula's confrontation with the horses—is the deepest and most efficacious plumbing of self. Skrebensky's actual person and the external societal world he represents having been eliminated in the previous ritual, this final ritual is a recognition of the ultimately internal nature of all battles. The ritual embodies not only the destruction of Ursula's fear of the false and inimical elements of male society internalized within herself, but also

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her discovery and acceptance of the archetypal male element within herself, allowing her to more nearly be a world unto herself.

Ursula confronts death and dissolution most directly in this last ritual: through her loss of child, the apparent physical danger to herself ("the moment of extinction" [p. 488]), and her highly paranoid state of mind. Through this intensified state, the boundary between dream and reality temporarily disintegrates, but her temporary loss of control and psychological dislocation does not signify lack of growth, only the requisite ritualistic immersion in the unconscious necessary for an initiate's full reconstitution of identity. Only at this late stage is Ursula paradoxically strong enough to be weakened so. The subsequent rebirth is consequently her fullest. By collapsing the distinction between external and internal worlds, real and imagined, Lawrence suggests the falsity of such absolute distinctions. The reality both of the child supposedly within Ursula and of the horses without remains ambiguous. And Ursula finds that the elimination of Skrebensky's physical presence is not the most difficult aspect of his eradication.

The crisis is precipitated by Ursula's fear of pregnancy. The pregnancy, in a sense, represents the reemergence of Skrebensky internally as an insidious part of herself. Because of Ursula's initial acceptance of societal mores, which dictate that a woman be married before she bears a child, the child-to-be represents for her Skrebensky's continued possession of her. Her experience with the horses also reflects her sense of vulnerability as passive chattel as embodied in her fear both of rape (by the symbolic male society of "the horse-group" [p. 489]) and of entrapment (wherever she runs, the horses seem to block her escape). Thus, although various critics¹⁸ insist that this experience is not connected with Ursula's former attachment to Skrebensky, the horses, like the child, represent the reemergence of that essential part of Skrebensky which both attracts and threatens Ursula—his essential maleness. He has earlier been clearly connected in her mind with horses. She notes his "horsey" (pp. 306 and 307) appearance when they first meet, and like the later embodiment of such maleness in *Women in Love*, Gerald Crich, he is a fine horseman—a role in which his fine physical appearance is particularly emphasized. Moreover, Ursula's interaction with the horses is bracketed by double mention of her pregnancy as a tie with Skrebensky, and the ritual thus effectively rids her of that final tie with a now primarily symbolic Skrebensky.

However, although Ursula's escape from both the horses and her pregnancy suggests her victory over the internal manifestations of an oppressive male world, this victory is accomplished not merely through the symbolic destruction of such oppressive elements, but through the acceptance of the male archetype within herself as well; for, according to Lawrence in his *Study of Thomas Hardy*, the male element is not

simply external in relationship to a woman but also an internal element, integral to her identity. In her interpretation of the scene, Ann McLaughlin also argues for Ursula's partial identification with the horses as a part of herself,¹⁹ and George Ford points out the ambivalence of Ursula's experience with the horses,²⁰ emphasizing the positive as well as the negative aspects and supporting his contention by citing Lawrence's discussion of the archetypal horse dream in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* where Lawrence explicitly identifies the horse as a symbol of maleness and argues that we both fear and admire the horses of our dreams.²¹

Ursula comes to the woods "for shelter" (p. 486) from the world of men, and yet it is here she immediately finds the essence of that male world, even before she meets the horses, in the very element that would shelter her—the trees which suddenly become threateningly phallic. A tree ultimately does offer her protection; she climbs one to escape the horses, and it is the fall from it which seems to abort the baby. But the tree alone does not thus "save" Ursula; she uses it to save herself, uniting its strength with a strength of her own: she "seized" the tree just as earlier she "took" Skrebensky: "Her hands were as hard as steel. She knew she was strong" (p. 489). Similarly, she is not "saved" by the death of the baby. Earlier in the scene, she has already decided that the child need not tie her to Skrebensky; it can be hers alone. She thus completes her recognition that she no longer needs the male Skrebensky at her side to give her a sense of completion, but at the same time, unlike her sister, Gudrun, she has become capable of accepting the authentic male element as an enriching complement to her own essential femaleness when it is presented to her in *Women in Love* in the person of Rupert Birkin.

Ursula's growth does not end with this last ritual. But the novel's end does mark her attainment of an essential plateau in her quest for identity and self-reliance, one where the radical divisions which have beset her are overcome. While she is fundamentally an adolescent for most of the novel, the Ursula who emerges in *Women in Love* is a woman able to lead as well as follow. The contrast in the nature of the rituals in which she takes part in the two novels reflects this change; for while the rituals in *The Rainbow* mainly facilitate her confused withdrawal into herself in order to find and establish that self, those in *Women in Love* reverse the process of withdrawal and encourage Ursula's gradual unfolding and reaching out toward others—both her sister, Gudrun, and her lover, Birkin—to become a social being again, even if the "society" she joins consists in the end of only two people. Her rituals in *The Rainbow*, therefore, are not the primarily anti-social or destructive acts they may seem, any more than the Biblical flood is.

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Concurrent with the destruction of aspects of self, lover, and child is preparation for future growth. Ursula's social retreat is merely a retreat from the false society that Lawrence thought modern England to be, and the rituals provide the sustaining link between the lost agrarian society of the original Brangwens and Ursula's later meaningful union with Birkin.

NOTES

¹I have elsewhere argued for the appropriateness of such structure and characterization to the novel's overall vision: "A Defense of the Second Half of *The Rainbow*: Its Structure and Characterization," *DHLR*, 13 (1980), pp. 150-160.

²David Daiches, *The Novel and the Modern World* (Chicago, 1960), p. 164.

³Daiches, p. 165.

⁴Roger Sale, "The Narrative Technique of *The Rainbow*," in *"The Rainbow" and "Women in Love": A Casebook*, ed. Colin Clarke (London, 1969), pp. 113, 114.

⁵S. L. Goldberg, "*The Rainbow*: Fiddle-bow and Sand," in *"The Rainbow" and "Women in Love": A Casebook*, p. 131.

⁶Goldberg, p. 125.

⁷Graham Hough, *The Dark Sun: A Study of D. H. Lawrence* (London, 1956), p. 57.

⁸Arnold Kettle, *An Introduction to the English Novel*, (New York, 1960), 2: 125.

⁹Kettle, 2: 131.

¹⁰Keith Sagar, *The Art of D. H. Lawrence* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 57.

¹¹George H. Ford, *Double Measure: A Study of the Novels and Stories of D. H. Lawrence* (New York, 1965), p. 151.

¹²F. R. Leavis, *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (Hammondsworth, 1964), p. 150.

¹³D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (New York, 1961), p. 458. All subsequent page references to *The Rainbow* will be given parenthetically in the body of the text.

¹⁴For a more detailed description of this process, see: Julius Moynihan, "Ritual Scenes in *The Rainbow*" in "*The Rainbow*" and "*Women in Love*": A Casebook, pp. 142-143, extracted from his *The Deed of Life* (Princeton, 1963). Moynihan lists Lydia's experience as one of only five rituals in the entire novel. I cannot account for his limited selection.

¹⁵This same transitional relationship between successive generations during the advent of industrialism is also dramatized by the Crich family in *Women in Love* between Gerald's imperious father, hollow within but still deriving a firmness and authority from the memory of an organic community, and the more self-conscious and ultimately self-destructive Gerald, whose only base of power is a mechanical one.

¹⁶Leavis, p. 148.

¹⁷D. H. Lawrence, *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (New York, 1922), pp. 173, 146-147.

¹⁸For instance, George Ford writes, "It is obviously an error to associate the lover with these animals merely because he is male" (Ford, p. 159). Keith Sagar argues that Ursula recognizes in the horses "the triumphant, flaming, overweening heart of the intrinsic male" which "was not in Skrebensky to be recognized" (Sagar, p. 65).

¹⁹Ann L. McLaughlin, "The Clenched and Knotted Horse in *The Rainbow*," *DHLR*, 13 (1980), pp. 179-186.

²⁰Ford, p. 159.

²¹Lawrence, *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, p. 251.